

3.3.1 AESTHETICS

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
(a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway corridor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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3 Environmental Setting

The Project area is located along the shore of San Pablo Bay, in the northwest portion of Contra Costa County. Views of the Project area are visible from residences along the shoreline in Hercules and Rodeo, Victoria Crescent Open Space, commercial facilities in Hercules, public roads, and developed and undeveloped parts of the Bay Trail.

From the shore, the view of the Project area includes primarily panoramic open water as well as the marine terminal, approximately 1.2 miles offshore; marine traffic that includes commercial vessels and recreational boats; two sets of Union Pacific Railroad tracks along the shoreline; residences to the south in Hercules; and San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge across the Bay to the north.

On the shoreline, the pipeline vault and the area where the submerged pipeline is located is lined with rip-rap for approximately 4 feet, and surrounded by a concrete apron. From the vault, the rip-rap extends along the shoreline in east and west directions. South of the vault, the upland area is barren to the railroad tracks and then slopes upward to the fenced, undeveloped Victoria Crescent Open Space. The slope of the shoreline and open space area block most of the views of the vault area. Consequently, the vault area is not easily visible from the open space, the Bay Trail, or the residences to the south of the open space (Pacific Refining Company 2008).

The Project area is located within scenic areas designated by both Contra Costa County and the city of Hercules. The waterway and the shoreline in the Project area are part of Contra Costa County's 'Scenic Waterways' system, as designated in the Open Space Element of its General Plan (Contra Costa County 2005). This designation is intended to emphasize the location's scenic character for consideration when reviewing nearby projects and development proposals.

In its General Plan, Hercules identifies as scenic locations the areas where the higher points east of I-80 overlook the San Pablo Bay with distant views of the coastal range in Marin County, as well as areas west of I-80 closer to the bay front. The city's General Plan specifically has policies to preserve important view corridors with views of the Project area, including:

Program 13.9.1, ii: Lower drainage views from Hercules Point north across open water to Lone Tree Point and beyond to Solano and Napa Counties

Program 13.9.1, iii: Lower drainage ridge views from the promontory of San Pablo Bay, Lone Tree Point, Franklin Canyon and Refugio Creek floodplain

Program 13.9.1, v: Views of San Pablo Bay and the Hills of Marin, Sonoma, and Napa Counties

(City of Hercules 1998).

The locations of potential marine contractor onshore facilities have not been finalized, though companies with locations in Vallejo, Alameda, Richmond, and Oakland have expressed an interest in bidding on the proposed Project (see Section 2.3.5, Contractor's Shore Base). These companies all have existing commercial/industrial facilities at each location. Views of their facilities would consist of onshore staging

areas consisting of industrial equipment such as derrick cranes, heavy machinery, barges, contaminant basins, trucks and containers.

Regulatory Setting

Federal

There are no Federal regulations related to aesthetics relevant to the proposed Project.

State

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has a State Scenic Highways program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways (section 260 et seq. of the California Streets and Highways Code). The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that either are eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. These highways are identified in section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. The program entails the regulation of land use and density of development, attention to the design of sites and structures, attention to and control of signage, landscaping and grading, and the under grounding of utility lines within the view corridor of designated scenic roadways.

Local

The city of Hercules and Contra Costa County have General Plans with elements that address aesthetics. Hercules published the "City of Hercules, California, General Plan" in September 1998. The City's Housing Element was approved in February 2003. Contra Costa County published "Contra Costa County General Plan 2005-2020" in January 2005.

Impact Analysis and Mitigation

Impact Discussion

- (a) The Project area is located in a county designated scenic waterway. During deconstruction activities, there would be several short term, temporary impacts to views of the scenic waterway. During removal of the Marine Terminal site several marine vessels would be anchored offshore at the Terminal. However, the presence of these vessels would be consistent with other views in the Bay, and would be temporary and short-term, occurring over the 5-½ month deconstruction period. During preparation of the onshore pipelines and vault for abandonment, a barge and supporting craft would be anchored close to the

shore as the base for abandonment activities. The presence of these vessels would also be short term and temporary, lasting approximately one week. The result of the proposed Project would be the removal of a man-made industrial structure in the scenic waterway, which would ultimately improve the aesthetic value of the area. Consequently, the proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, and impacts from the proposed Project would be beneficial to the Project area. (Class IV)

(b) No Federal, State or locally designated scenic routes are located in, or are visible from the Project area. The proposed Project would thus have no impact on scenic resources including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway corridor. (No Impact)

(c) There are no permanent above-ground features associated with the proposed Project. The proposed Project would remove the Marine Terminal from the scenic waterway, improving views of San Pablo Bay from the shoreline, public roads, Lone Tree Point, the Bay Trail, and Victoria Crescent Open Space. The Project is consistent with Contra Costa County's Scenic Resource Policy 9-27, which promotes the elimination of negative features from scenic views. Rip rap similar to that currently used along the shoreline will be used to restore the vault area. Because piping and concrete will be removed from the vault area, the volume of restored area will be somewhat smaller than the existing vault area and will be blended into the existing rip rap along the adjacent portions of the shoreline to approximate pre-existing conditions. By removing the man-made marine terminal, the long-term effects of the proposed Project would be an increase in the aesthetic value of the Project area. Consequently, the Project would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, and would result in beneficial impacts. (Class IV)

Existing marine contractor onshore facilities would be used for the proposed Project in a way that is consistent with current uses at those facilities. As such, the proposed Project would not alter or change current baseline conditions for aesthetics or visual resources. Therefore, the Project would have no impact on the visual character or quality of the marine contractor onshore sites. (No Impact)

(d) No new source of visual glare or substantial light would be expected to occur due to the proposed Project. As stated above, there are no above-ground features associated with the Project. Work hours would adhere to city of Hercules requirements and would be anticipated to be conducted between 8 am and 5 pm; no sources of substantial night-time lighting would be anticipated. There would be no impact with respect to visual glare or light. (No Impact)